

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 068826

LIMDIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT GABORONE 0739 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO CAPE
TOWN DAR ES SALAAM LUSAKA MAPUTO PRETORIA 25 MAR 77

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 0739

LIMDIS

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, BC

SUBJECT: GOB REQUESTS MILITARY AID

REF: A. STATE 045187, B. GABORONE 0427 (NOTALS)

1. SUMMARY: ON MARCH 24 GOB MADE FORMAL ORAL REQUEST FOR
MILITARY ASSISTANCE FROM USG. OUR REPLY WAS NOT ENCOURAGING,
WE AGREED TO TRANSMIT REQUEST. END SUMMARY.

2. ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY TO PRESIDENT, TIBONE, CALLED DCM
MARCH 24 TO REQUEST HIM TO DROP BY TO DISCUSS "SECURITY MATTERS".
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TIBONE RECALLED GO'S WELL-KNOWN NEEDS IN REFUGEE RELIEF AND
ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FIELD. (THESE ARE OUTLINED IN MESSAGES
REPORTING ON UN FARAH MISSION AND REFLECTED IN FORTHCOMING FARAH
REPORT). TIBONE COMMENTED THAT GOB, WITH THE HELP OF ITS
"TRADITIONAL DONORS", WAS DETERMINED TO SHOULDER THE REFUGEE BURDEN.
BUT, HE SAID, THESE GOOD INTENTIONS MEANT LITTLE IF GOB COULD NOT
PROVIDE FOR SECURITY OF REFUGEES. TURNING TO HIS MAIN ARGU-

MENT, TIBONE REFERRED TO PRESIDENT'S FEBRUARY CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR (REF B). HE SAID BOTSWANA NOW STANDS OPEN TO AGGRESSION BY HER NEIGHBORS, ESPECIALLY RHODESIA. TIBONE ASKED THAT WE TRANSMIT GOB'S URGENT REQUEST FOR "MODEST" MILITARY AID. IF USG AGREES IN PRINCIPLE, THEN APPROPRIATE GOB OFFICIALS (POLICE COMMISSIONER, SECRETARY TO CABINET, ETC.) WOULD SUBMIT DETAILED LIST OF NEEDS. TWO AREAS TIBONE MENTIONED WERE MILITARY TRANSPORT (TRUCKS, SCOUT CARS, ETC.) AND SMALL ARMS AND AMMUNITION.

3. DCM REPLIED ALONG LINES OF REF A, NOTING THAT INTERAGENCY REVIEW OF OVERALL QUESTION OF MILITARY AID WAS CURRENTLY UNDERWAY IN WASHINGTON AND NO NEW PROGRAMS BEING CONSIDERED. WHILE GOB REQUEST WOULD BE TRANSMITTED, IT WAS UNLIKELY THAT ANY DECISION WOULD BE MADE PENDING COMPLETION OF POLICY REVIEW.

4. TIBONE RAISED CASE OF ZAIRE AND SAID GOB WAS OF COURSE CONCERNED ABOUT THREAT THAT SITUATION POSED TO ALL AFRICAN COUNTRIES. IF ZAIRE, HE ASKED, WITH ITS CONSIDERABLE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT WAS CAUSE FOR CONCERN, HOW MUCH MORE SO "AT LEAST POTENTIALLY" WAS NEAR(DEFENSELESS BOTSWANA?

5. DCM ASSURED TIBONE GOB'S REQUEST WOULD BE PROMPTLY CONVEYED TO WASHINGTON, CAUTIONING TIBONE ONE AGAIN AGAINST OPTIMISM.

6 IN RESPONSE TO DCM'S QUESTION, TIBONE SAID HE DID NOT BELIEVE GOB WOULD RECEIVE MILITARY ASSISTANCE FROM LIBYA. DCM DID NOT ASK, NOR DID TIBONE VOLUNTEER, ANY INFORMATION ABOUT CHINESE ARMS DELIVERIES TO GOB.

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7. COMMENT: A FEW PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS MAY BE USEFUL: FIRST, TIBONE'S ROLE AS TRUSTED INSIDER IN PRESIDENT KHAMA'S ENTOURAGE MEANS WE HAVE TO REGARD THIS REQUEST AS OFFICIAL AND SERIOUS; SECOND, ITS TIMING MAY BE NO LESS IMPORTANT THAN THE REQUEST ITSELF, E.G. COMING SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH VISITS TO NEARBY COUNTRIES OF PRESIDENTS PODGORNÝ AND CASTRO STRESSING THEIR ROLE AS SOURCE OF ARMS AID; THIRD, DRAFT BILL CREATING FIRST "BOTSWANA DEFENSE FORCE" WAS SUBMITTED TO PARLIAMENT THE DAY BEFORE. (THE GOB MAY HAVE IN MIND EQUIPPING DEFENSE FORCE WITH WESTERN ARMS AS PMU (POLICE MOBILE UNIT) IS BEING EQUIPPED WITH PRC ARMS.) WE REALIZE GOB REQUEST RAISES (AND LEAVES UNANSWERED) GREAT MANY QUESTIONS, AND EVEN TO ASK THEM MAY RISK GIVING WRONG SIGNALS. HOWEVER, I HAVE REQUESTED APPOINTMENT NEXT WEEK WITH FONMIN GOWE AND WOULD APPRECIATE ANY INITIAL INDICATION OF U.S. REACTION TO GOB REQUEST, WHETHER STILL NEGATIVE (REF A) OR PERHAPS NOW LESS SO.

NORLAND

UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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